

## **Flying Frogs Celebrate 30 Years of Excellence**

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Navy Parachute Team Public Affairs

Why would anyone jump out of a perfectly good airplane? It's a common question that members of the Navy Parachute Team hear, and one that spectators have asked for the past 30 years.

The team, nicknamed the "Leap Frogs," kicks off its 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year by performing at the Naval Air Facility El Centro Air Show Saturday, March 13. The air show is free and gates open to the public at 8 a.m. The Leap Frogs will join many other performers, including the Navy Blue Angels. The Navy Parachute Team will also perform a special night pyrotechnics show during the "Food Festival" on Friday, March 12. Check out the NAF El Centro website ([www.nafec.navy.mil](http://www.nafec.navy.mil)) for more details.

This air show marks the Leap Frogs' first opportunity of the busy season to demonstrate their skills to the public after two months of training eight hours a day, five days a week. This will also be the first public performance for the team's newest members. Veteran members on the team also know it is the first chance to answer the "perfectly good airplane" question. BM1(SEAL) Tony DelVecchio has been on the team for one year and his answer is always the same.

"It's a great way to get exposure for the Navy," he says. "We jump into a lot of places around the country that have little, if any, Navy presence, and our shows always make people stop and watch. That's what we want to do, so when we get down to the ground we already have an audience who wants to know what we're about. That's when we can tell them about the Navy."

But DelVecchio, his 15 teammates, and those who have been stationed on the team during the last 30 years wouldn't do the job if they didn't enjoy it. Members come to the Navy Parachute Team on a volunteer basis, as they did early in the team's history. The Leap Frogs originally formed in the early 60s, when Navy SEALs began voluntarily jumping at air shows on weekends. The Department of Defense officially sanctioned the Leap Frogs in 1974, designating them officially as a military demonstration team.

In addition to Navy SEALs, the team now also has SWCC (Special Warfare Combatant-craft Crewman) commandos. When assigned to Special Boat Teams, SWCCs operate and maintain the state-of-the-art, high-performance, high-speed boats used for special operations missions. While the Navy Parachute Team has had some changes in its 30-year history, the team maintains its original mission — supporting Navy recruiting by demonstrating Navy excellence to the American people.

Check out the Naval Special Warfare Command website at [www.seal.navy.mil](http://www.seal.navy.mil) for the latest Navy Parachute Team 2004 schedule.